

TOO MUCH GRANDFATHER.

THE floor was littered with manuscript, as usual in a newspaper office. The dark pigeon-holes were filled with selections put away with a purpose, but is soon forgotten. Other selections had been added, until it would have defied the search of the ingenious, and yet at times the editor might take out one at random, to find himself musing with the memories of years.

Thus I carelessly reached for a stiff and moldy clipping which had been disturbed by a violent search for something placed there. Catching a word or two from the mutilated end and I pulled forth and found myself reading the death notice of an old and valued friend—Captain Randall Fonda, who had won his title in the British service, and whose stories of campaigns in India had whiled away many a weary hour. The captain had fallen heir to a small fortune left by an aunt in the year in which I lived, which decided him to settle there, and for the purpose of keeping up his interest in public affairs he became a frequent contributor to the pages of the Auraria Gazette.

Coming in one night rather late, somewhat more serious than usual, Captain Fonda pulled up a chair and whispered:

"I am going to get married!"

"Congratulations!"

"Yes, to a daughter of one of the oldest families here about. Her mother wants the engagement announced, and she has written it out in this form."

Here he took from his vest pocket a memorandum book, from between the leaves of which he drew a note paper, upon which was written:

"Mrs. Lucinda MacOwen announces the betrothal of her daughter, Miss Hortense Marie MacOwen, to Captain Randall Fonda, the marriage to take place in the early fall."

"The Lady," continued Captain Fonda, "also asked me to give you this paper, which she thought would save you the trouble of writing an editorial notice."

The paper read:

"We must congratulate our newly acquired citizen, Captain Randall Fonda, upon his conquest of the heart of so amiable a lady as Miss MacOwen, and a granddaughter of the late Colonel Henry G. De Long, who was one of McGinville's most prominent, influential and wealthy citizens."

The captain then retired, and became thereafter the bearer of a remarkable series of announcements, leading up to the wedding day. First came a notice stating that "Society was taking great interest in the announced betrothal of Cap. Fonda and Miss MacOwen, the lady being well known as the granddaughter of the late Colonel G. De Long, who was one of McGinville's most prominent, influential and wealthy citizens." Then there was the announcement of visits from numerous young ladies, who had come to congratulate the bride-expectant, "who was the granddaughter of one of McGinville's most prominent," etc. Finally, after a multitude of receptions came the formal declaration:

"The marriage of Miss Hortense Marie MacOwen and Captain Fonda will take place at high noon, October 12. Miss MacOwen is the granddaughter of the late Colonel Henry G. De Long, who was one of McGinville's most prominent, influential and wealthy citizens."

When the foreman received this notice he asked:

"Why can't we keep this paragraph standing! The old grandfather seems to be destined to play his part all the way through, and we might as well make some 'fat' out of it!"

He was a rude sort of fellow, with whose coarse wit I could have no sympathy, especially when a friend was concerned as groom.

On the day preceding the wedding the notice was repeated, grandfather paragraph and all. Strangely enough the officiating minister omitted the name of the old gentleman in his performance of the ceremony, but the Auraria Gazette next morning gave a prominent place to this notice:

"Married at the Church of St. Chrysostom, Captain Randall Fonda and Miss Marie MacOwen. The bride is the granddaughter of the late Colonel Henry G. De Long, who was one of McGinville's most prominent, influential and wealthy citizens. The couple will spend the honeymoon at Eastern resorts."

The Auraria Gazette was by no means relieved from its work of resurrection on behalf of Col. Henry G. De Long. His was an influence that could not be repressed. The local agency presided over by the mother-in-law kept the public fully informed as to the movements of the captain and his wife, each time identifying the latter as "the granddaughter of the late Colonel Henry G. De Long," etc., etc. One day the mother-in-law called at the office and demanded a personal interview with the editor-in-chief, as she only dealt with the heads of houses when she went out. To him she confided this:

"The citizens of Auraria remember with pleasure the marriage of Captain Randall Fonda and Miss Hortense Marie MacOwen. As the granddaughter of the late Colonel Henry G. De Long, one of McGinville's most prominent, influential and wealthy citizens, the bride will be welcomed into our most select society upon her return."

"Front page position, madame," said the editor, "I shall see personally that it gets there."

The couple had to return, select a house, hold a reception, and in other ways keep before the public. There was no escaping the death grip of the old grandfather in each case, and it was not long until every reader took it for granted that the Colonel Henry G. De Long was to be found somewhere whenever Captain and Mrs. Fonda were mentioned.

The captain was proud and buoyant for a few days, then he began to walk with slower tread, and the cordial smile had left his face.

"No," he would say, "there is nothing the matter with me—only a little touch of the Ganges fever. It will soon be over."

Calling into the office one night, later than usual, he was taciturn and uneasy.

"A word with you," said he, to be held secret. I know who Colonel Henry G. De Long was, but for the life of me I have never been able to locate the whereabouts of the late Mr. MacOwen. Heaven only knows how I can repress my curiosity!"

Winter melted into spring, and summer came, giving away to autumn. As the serene leaves were falling into a new made grave the remains of Captain Fonda were deposited therein. He had died without having his curiosity enlightened. The Auraria Gazette next day printed a notice, the manuscript of which was in the same old hand writing:

"The death of the late Captain Randall Fonda came as a great blow to his bereaved wife, Mrs. Fonda, as the grand daughter of the late Colonel Henry G. De Long, one of McGinville's most prominent, influential and wealthy citizens, has received the deep sympathy of those who have had the pleasure of knowing her during her brief married life."

The years have come and gone, and silver threads have invaded raven hair. This old message from twenty years ago rests uneasily upon my mind, and in the effort to throw it off, the clipping is dropped upon the floor, and I picked up the McGinville Banner, just received by midnight mail. Eagerly tearing the wrapper I turned to the social column, where a marriage announcement attracted my attention. Mrs. Ealoner Finchman announces the engagement of her daughter, Miss Frances Agnes, to Henry Arthur Mountserratt. The notice goes on:

"This marriage will be a notable affair, because of the great social prominence of the bride, who is the granddaughter of the late Colonel Henry F. De Long, one of McGinville's most prominent, influential and wealthy citizens."

The paper had dropped from my hand. The last street car for the suburbs was sounding the gong, and I hastened to leave my ghostly company behind.

There was too much grandfather.

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